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Sun Chief, The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian. [Published for the Institute of Human Relations] by LEO W. SIMMONS

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in latent form. If a character is recessive and appears once in a thousand of the population, complete sterilization continued for ten generations will not reduce its frequency by even a half. A sick person is recognized as such and therefore has less chance of having offspring; but his healthy relatives bearing the germ of the illness will transmit it to their offspring, and thus they are the really dangerous persons. The author warns that, except in relation to the transmission of certain rare illnesses, very little is known of human heredity; and he emphasizes the importance of the influence of environment.

Ten years ago publication of such a book would hardly have been justified, as most of the contents are rather generally known. But today the book gains significance by showing that the "new" race theories established by the Nazis were actually refuted long ago by classical and conclusive experiments, beginning with those of Mendel. "When race is discussed at present, we backslide into antiquated notions of heredity" (p. 200). In his cautious—perhaps overcautious—way the author does not even mention the Nazis by name: he does not point out that what he describes as "rubbish" is the very foundation of the Nazi theories of race.

E. J. GUMBEL

SIMMONS, LEO W., ed. *Sun Chief, The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian*. [Published for the Institute of Human Relations.] New Haven: Yale University Press. 1942. 397 pp., appendices 56 pp. \$4.25.

Don C. Talayesva was born fifty years ago in Oraibi, Arizona. This was the time when the conflict between the old and new ways of life was becoming acute, expressing itself in Hopi society through the opposition between the "Friendly," who were willing to cooperate with the white man, and the "Hostile," who were determined to resist. Born as a Hopi, reared as a Hopi child, Don was sent when he was about ten years old to the American school, and until twenty he planned and hoped for an American life. At that time a sudden illness opened a violent crisis in his mind; through dreams and visions he became acquainted with his familiar spirit, and in compliance with his warning he returned to his homeland, renounced Christianity and settled down into the ways and customs of Hopi life. Dr. Simmons, who met him first in June 1938, succeeded in persuading him to write the story of his life. This story has been made by Dr. Simmons the subject of a highly interesting and easily read book, which proves to be a first class document in ethnology, though not exactly in the same sense that the editor had in mind when preparing this most remarkable work.

The function of primitive biographies is to provide a psychological expression of cultural phenomena. This psychological expression—because it is psychological—is immediately accessible to any human being, even to one who belongs to a quite different cultural surrounding. The systematic study of a culture, on the other hand, is always a description of that culture from the outside; and all cultures, considered from that point of view, appear like as many irreducible, close universes. Thus, in the opinion of the reviewer, the value of the biographic method is not in providing a new scientific approach but in eliminating problems, or pseudo-problems, which appear unintelligible from the outside but vanish when approached from the inside. It does not raise new problems, it suppresses old ones.

In the light of this observation Simmons' laborious attempt to present a sample of what he expects from the study of life histories does not add very much to the plain, matter-of-fact account of Don's diary. The ambivalent attitude of a stepfather toward his adopted son, and the implied motivations, are perfectly clear to the reader, for the same situation has often been developed by, and is a basic theme of, world folklore and literature from France to China. Simmons' treatment of Don's biography constantly oscillates between a dry, factual chronological report of small events, and a surreptitiously reintroduced course in Hopi ethnology. It would be a great delusion to assume that an autobiographic presentation of Hopi life is not bound to be exactly—and inescapably—as artificial as any more systematic treatment of the same subject would be.

But when, from time to time, the proper tone is found, the documents that are offered are priceless, as for instance this childhood recollection: "as she [his mother] climbed the ladder to the roof of a winter-house, I saw the Katcinas resting near by. It seemed that they had cut off their heads and laid them to one side. They were eating and were using human heads and mouths like our own. I felt very sad to see those Katcinas without their own heads." And the account of the child's distress before the conflict between the objective order of the generations and the formal requirements of the kinship system is the most enlightening document ever presented on kinship psychology in primitive society.

In the last chapter of his narrative Don mentions that some Indians believe that Hitler may be the "Chosen White Brother" who, according to the Hopi legend, will come back some day to punish the wicked and deliver the righteous. Two years ago exactly the same beliefs were recorded by the reviewer among the poor Negroes of Martinique. It would be interesting to know whether they are the result of a subtle totalitarian

propaganda among colored peoples, or whether that remarkable convergence of interpretation may be accounted for by a natural resentment against white domination.

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS

KERNER, ROBERT J. *The Urge to the Sea. The Course of Russian History*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1942. 190 pp., index 22 pp. \$2.50.

Professor Kerner's compact survey is more of a promise than a fulfillment. A "brief preliminary exposition" of but part of a seven-year investigation of the role of such diverse factors as rivers, portages, ostroms, monasteries and furs on the course of Russian history, it presents the valuable materials gleaned from a vast array of printed sources in the form of a well-nigh irreducible skeleton of facts. In a first part the author examines in brief outline the major features of his theme: the pivotal role of the Valdai Hills; the importance of the way to the Greeks for the development of the Kiev sector of Russia; the expansion of Novgorod;

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